

# Odd Surnames Beginning with Alpha

## *A Selection of Examples on Byzantine Seals in the Harvard Collections*

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In our opinion, the future of Byzantine prosopographical studies depends on the publication of seals with family names in museum collections. We base this assertion on the fact that more than two-thirds of available data for the prosopography of the eleventh century will come from seals. Family names are relatively easy to read when all the letters of a name are present and the name is relatively familiar. Problems develop, however, when a surname is uncommon and letters are either absent or unclear. To justify a hypothesized or restored reading, a researcher's initial reaction will often be to try and find a plausible etymology in Greek. If this fails, the next step usually involves searching for a plausible etymology in another language, such as Slavic or Armenian. In preparing a recent study on the Anzas family, we examined a number of other seals in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection that bore odd surnames or peculiar first names beginning with the letter alpha.<sup>1</sup> We decided that it would be worthwhile to publish a select group of such seals in order to illustrate the problems that may arise and the solutions that may be attempted when endeavoring to read seals bearing odd surnames or nicknames. The results of the inquiry are summarized at the end.

1 J. Nesbitt and W. Seibt, "The Anzas Family: Members of the Byzantine Civil Establishment in the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Centuries," *DOP* 67 (2013): 189–207.

### 1. Nikephoros Abasios, monk (eleventh century, second half)

DO 58.106.348.— D. 16 mm; field 11 mm.

*Obv.* Inscription of four lines, preceded by a cross between horizontal bars; the last two letters are flanked by horizontal bars.

- + - |CΦPA|ΓICNI|KHΦO|-PY-

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines, preceded by decoration of indeterminate design; the last two letters are flanked by horizontal bars.

..|MONA|XOVTΘ|ARACI|-OV-

Σφραγὶς Νικηφόρου μοναχοῦ τοῦ Ἀβασίου.



FIG. 1: Seal of Nikephoros Abasios, monk (eleventh century, second half). DO 58.106.348.

After scrutinizing the seal with a magnifying glass, we have read the second letter of the third line on the reverse as a beta rather than a pi. We admit that pi is not impossible, and for this reason we have placed

a dot under the beta. The brother of the well-known Sebastos and megas domestikos of the West, Gregory Pakourianos, calls himself Apasis on his seals, and his brother's typikon refers to him as Apasios.<sup>2</sup>

Nikephoros might have been the son of an Abas or, alternatively, he may have used "Abas" as a family name. Abas is a common name in Armenian, and even appears among the reigning families of the Bagratids. In late antiquity, the name was related to the Syriac "āwā/ābā," but it was later associated more with the Arabic "Abbās."<sup>3</sup> A seal recently excavated in Petra (western Georgia) attests an Abasios, imperial askretis and judge of the Peloponnesos and Hellas.<sup>4</sup> Another specimen from Petra, belonging to Theodoros Ab(. . .), taxiarchos, is more problematic.<sup>5</sup> Two solutions for restoring the surname present themselves, Abasgos and Abasios, but we also need to keep in mind the Abazasdze, one of the most influential families in western Georgia at this time.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps our Nikephoros was a member of this family. Still, when all is said and cited, Abasios may here mean simply "Abchazian."<sup>7</sup>

## 2. John Achianos, magistros (eleventh century, second half)

(a) DO 55.1.2882.— D. 14 mm. (b) DO 55.1.2883.— D. 16 mm. The two specimens are from the same boulloterion and so their inscriptions are combined.

*Obv.* Bust of the Virgin orans without a medallion of Christ (Blachernitissa type). Visible at right: Θ — [Μ(ήτηρ)] Θ(εοῦ).

2 For the seals, see I. Iashvili (†) and W. Seibt, "Byzantinische Siegel aus Petra in Westgeorgien," *SBS* 9 (2006): 6 n. 9; I. Koltzida-Makre, "Η συλλογή μολυβδοβούλλων Δημητρίου Δούκα," in *Hypermachos: Festschrift für Werner Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Stavrakos, A.-K. Wassiliou, and M. K. Krikorian (Wiesbaden, 2008), 148, no. 18; and W. Seibt, "The Byzantine Seals of the Pakourianos Clan," in *Representing History: Theoretical Trends and Case Studies* (Tbilisi, 2014), 131. For the typikon, see P. Gautier, "Le typikon du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos," *REB* 42 (1984): 21.24 and 97.1293.

3 H. Achařyan, *Hayots' andznanneri bayaran* (Erevan, 1942–62; Beirut, 1972), 1:1–2.

4 Iashvili and Seibt, "Siegel aus Petra," 5–6, no. 5 (eleventh century, ca. first third).

5 Ibid., 6–7, no. 6 (eleventh century, first half).

6 M. D. Lordkipanidze, *Georgia in the XI–XII Centuries* (Tbilisi, 1987), 50–53.

7 See, for example, *Iosephi Genesisii Regum libri quattuor*, ed. A. Lesmueller-Werner and I. Thurn, CFHB 14 (Berlin, 1978), 24.18.

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines.

ΘΚΕΡ.ΙΩΜΑΓ.ΤΡΩΤ.ΑΧΙΑΝ

Θ(εοτό)κε β(οή)[θ(ει)] Ἰω(άννη) μαγ[ί]στρω τ[ῶ]  
Ἀχ(ιαν)ῶ.



FIG. 2A: Seal of John Achianos, magistros (eleventh century, second half). DO 55.1.2882.



FIG. 2B: Seal of John Achianos, magistros (eleventh century, second half). DO 55.1.2883.

In the Septuagint, 2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel) 23:33, we find "Ἀχ(ιαν) υἱὸς Σαραδ ὁ Αραουρίτης."

## 3. Leo Achianos, protoproedros (eleventh/twelfth century)

Fogg 2183.— D. 17 mm.

*Obv.* The Virgin orans with a bust of Christ before her (Episkepsis type). Sigla at left and right: ΜΡ–ΘΥ — Μή(τηρ) Θ(εοῦ).

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines.

ΘΚΕΡ,Θ,ΛΕΟΝΤΑ|ΑΑΕΔΡΟ|ΤΟΝΑΧΙ|ΑΝΟΝ

Θ(εοτό)κε β(οή)θ(ει) Αέοντα (πρωτο)(πρό)εδρο(ν) τὸν  
Ἀχ(ιαν)όν.



FIG. 3: Seal of Leo Achianos, protoproedros (eleventh/twelfth century). Fogg 2183.

See the commentary for no. 2.

#### 4. Andronikos Akrivitziotēs (twelfth century, perhaps 1120–50)

DO 58.106.1599.— D. 20 mm.

*Obv.* Inscription of four lines, preceded by decoration.

+|+AN|ΔΡ|ΝΙΚΗ|ΤΗ

*Rev.* Inscription of three lines, followed by decoration.

ΑΚΡΙ|ΡΙΤΣΙ|ΩΤΗ|·

Ἀνδρ[(ο)]νίκου τοῦ Ἀκριβιτιζιώτου.

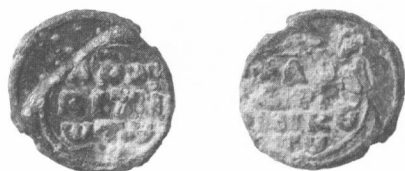


FIG. 4: Seal of Andronikos Akrivitziotēs (twelfth century, perhaps 1120–50). DO 58.106.1599.

Two Akrivitziotai appear in the fourteenth-century *Synopsis* of the miracles of St. Eugenios of Trebizond by the skeuophylax John Lazaropoulos. Theodore Akrivitziotēs, a Byzantine commander, was killed in 1223 in a battle between troops of the Trapezuntine emperor Andronikos Gidos and the Seljuk sultan ‘Alā’ al-dīn Kayqubād I.<sup>8</sup> In this same war, a George Akrivitziotēs is mentioned as commander of a small troop of men.<sup>9</sup> The *PLP* lists four individuals with the surname Kryvitziotēs, who were active between 1260 and 1421.<sup>10</sup>

We have not proposed any etymology for the name because we do not know. We will simply say that names ending with -iotes are normally derived from toponyms,

8 J. O. Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysii 154*, *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 5 (Uppsala, 1996), 318.1310. See also A. G. K. Savvides and B. Hendrickx, *Encyclopaedic Prosopographical Lexicon of Byzantine History and Civilization*, trans. A. Hendry, J. Koniordos, and E. Petridis-Ktena (Turnhout, 2007–12), 1:108. The Byzantine text uses “Melik,” a common word for sultan.

9 Rosenqvist, *Hagiographic Dossier*, 312.1210 and Savvides and Hendrickx, *Lexicon*, 1:107–8.

10 *PLP* 13837–40.

yet there is no Akrivitzion or Krivitzion known. Such a name could perhaps be combined with ἀκριβί, ἀκριβός, etc. The nearest we could find was Κρίβησκα, a village on the river Eleiakos in the Peloponnesos, mentioned in the *Chronicle of Morea*: “στὸν ποταμὸν Ἡλειακοῦ, στήν Κρίβησκαν τὸ λέγουν.”<sup>11</sup> The corresponding passage in the Paris manuscript, however, has “Κρήσαιβαν.”<sup>12</sup>

#### 5. John Amageireutos (twelfth century)

Fogg 2321.— D. 20 mm.

*Obv.* Bust of Saint Michael holding in his left hand a trefoil-topped scepter. At left and right: Μ–Χ — Μ(ι)χ(αήλ).

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines.

ΚΕΡ,Θ,|ΙΩΤΟΑ|ΜΑΓΙ|ΡΕΥΤ,

Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) Ἰω(άννη) το Ἀμαγίρευτ(ω).



FIG. 5: Seal of John Amageireutos (twelfth century). Fogg 2321.

The adjective ἀμαγείρευτος means “uncooked.”<sup>13</sup> A document of 1271 mentions a Michael Amageireutos as an inhabitant of Kos,<sup>14</sup> and a Nicholas Amageireutos was metropolitan of Prusa from 1283/84 to 1285.<sup>15</sup> Inscriptions from Crete attest three Amageireptoi in the 1320s and 1330s.<sup>16</sup>

11 J. Schmitt, *The Chronicle of Morea: A History in Political Verse, Relating the Establishment of Feudalism in Greece by the Franks in the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1904; Groningen, 1967), 426.6575H.

12 Ibid., 427.6575P. See also W. J. Aerts and H. Hokwerda, *Lexicon of the Chronicle of Morea* (Groningen, 2002), 5.

13 As noted by *PLP* 91144 (ex 20159).

14 M. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, *Βυζαντινά έγγραφα της Μονής Πάτμου*, vol. 2, *Δημοσίων λειτουργῶν* (Athens, 1980), no. 70; for the name, see 201.18.

15 *PLP* 91144 (ex 20159).

16 Gregory and Leo Amageireptos: G. Gerola, *I monumenti veneti nell’isola di Creta* (Venice, 1905–32), 4:443–44; K. D. Kalokyres,

### 6. Aoutitzes, monk (?) (twelfth century, middle decades)

DO 55.1.5005.— D. 23 mm; field 17 mm.

*Obv.* Bust of the Virgin, turned slightly to the left and holding a diminutive Christ on her right arm. Sigla at left and right: ..-ΘΥ — [Μή(τη)ρ] Θ(εο)ύ.

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines, preceded by decoration.

+|CKEΠE|ΠAPΘENE|EVTETΛHA|OTITZ.

Σκέπε, Παρθένε, εὐτελῇ Ἀουτίτζ[η].



FIG. 6: Seal of Aoutitzes, monk (?) (twelfth century, middle decades). DO 55.1.5005.

A twelve-syllable metrical seal (B5). We note two seals published by Cheynet and Theodoridis. The first, dating to the eleventh/twelfth century, belongs to a Symeon nobelissimos. The editors read the family name as Aouzas, but it could just as well be Aouxas.<sup>17</sup> The second, dating to the eleventh century, belongs to a Nikephoros patrikios, anthypatos, and judge, whose family name the editors read as Loutzes (?).<sup>18</sup> The surname, however, might be Aoutzes.<sup>19</sup> These surnames could be related to the Greek ἄουτος, meaning “unwounded, unhurt” or “without hearing, ignorant,” or to the Pontic ἀούτος, from the Greek οὔτος and the Turkish demonstrative particle “ha,” meaning αὐτὸς ἐδῶ.<sup>20</sup>

*The Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete* (New York, 1973), 41; and *PLP* 734–35. Nicholas Amageireptos: Gerola, *Monumenti veneti*, 462 and *PLP* 736. For various spellings of ἀμαγείρευτος, see also A. A. Papadopoulos, *Ἱστορικὸν λεξικὸν τῆς Νέας Ἑλληνικῆς* (Athens, 1933–), 1:493.

17 J.-C. Cheynet and D. Theodoridis, *Sceaux byzantins de la collection D. Theodoridis: Les sceaux patronymiques* (Paris, 2010), no. 10.

18 Ibid., no. 123.

19 For the suggested reading of no. 123 (with reference to no. 10), see A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, review of *Sceaux byzantins de la collection D. Theodoridis*, by J.-C. Cheynet and D. Theodoridis, *BZ* 104 (2011): 749.

20 A. A. Papadopoulos, *Ἱστορικὸν λεξικὸν τῆς Ποντικῆς διαλέκτου* (Athens, 1958–61), 1:81. We thank Prof. Tzitzilis for this reference.

### 7. Theodore Aphr(a)ziates, monk (?) (eleventh century, second half)

DO 58.106.3204.— D. 20 mm; field 13 mm.

*Obv.* Inscription of four lines, the last two letters between two horizontal bars.

·KERO|..EITW|..ΔOV|–ΛΩ–

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines, preceded and followed by decoration.

·|ΘEO|ΔΩΡΩ..|ΤΩΑΦΡ|ΖΙΑΤ.|·

Κ(ύρι)ε βο[γῆ]ει τῶ [σῶ] δούλω θεοδώρω [(μον)αχ(ῶ)]  
τῶ Ἀφρ[α]ζιάτ[η].



FIG. 7: Seal of Theodore Aphr(a)ziates, monk (?) (eleventh century, second half). DO 58.106.3204.

The family name may be related to the toponym Aphrazeia, an important bandon or toponym, although of unknown location.<sup>21</sup> A variant form of the surname, Aphraziotes, is found on a seal in the Paris collection.<sup>22</sup> The legend on the reverse reads: Εὐ[στα]θίω κουροπαλάτι (καὶ) (πρω)τ(ο)βεστιάρι[ω] τῶ Ἀφραζιώτ(η). We thank J.-C. Cheynet for pointing out a parallel seal in the British Library, on which only the first two letters of the surname are legible.<sup>23</sup>

### 8. Alexios Apimpithioun (twelfth century, second half)

Fogg 3979.— D. 31 mm; field 20 mm.

*Obv.* St. George holding in his right hand a spear, his left hand resting on a shield set on the ground.

21 K. Belke and M. Restle, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, *TIB* 4 (Vienna, 1984), 131.

22 BnF 15 (Zacos). We thank Jean-Claude Cheynet for the photo.

23 *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1900–1905* (London, 1907), 428, CXLVI 45.

Legend in two columns: Ο|Α|Γ|Ι|Ο|C-Γ|Ε|ΩΡ|Γ|Ι|Ο,  
— Ὁ ἄγιος Γεώργιος(ς).

Rev. Inscription of four lines.

ΣΦΡ,ΓΙC|ΑΛΕΞΙΟΝ|ΤΟΝΑΠΙΜ|ΠΙΘΙΟΥΜ

Σφρ(α)γίς Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Ἀπιμπιθιούμ.



FIG. 8: Seal of Alexios Apimpithioum (twelfth century, second half). Fogg 3979.

The etymology of the name Apimpithioum is unclear; we have even tried Coptic. Although the name is rare, there are some traces in the sources. In a lysis from ca. June 1109,<sup>24</sup> we find the hypographe of George Apimpithioum, imperial notarios of the *sekreton tou genikou*.<sup>25</sup> In addition, an act of the sebastos John Belissariotes mentions a Constantine Apimptioum, dikaiofylax, who had participated in a judicial session on 6 June 1196.<sup>26</sup>

In Father Laurent's handwritten catalogue of seals that he studied at Istanbul in the 1930s, he noted one belonging to an Aetios (no. 1038). A bust of St. George appears on the obverse, and an inscription of four lines on the reverse reads:

+CΦΡΑ|ΓΙCΑΕΤΙΩ|ΤΩΑΠΙΜΠΙ|ΘΙΟΥΜ

Laurent dated it to the eleventh/twelfth century. This seal is not in the new catalogue of seals in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, so we cannot examine it. A reader has also mentioned the seal of a John Apimpithioum, which should be in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. This information comes from a card of Father Laurent's, but it was not

24 For the date, see F. Dölger and P. Wirth, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, vol. 2, *Regesten von 1025–1204*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1995), no. 1246.

25 Zepos, *Jus*, 1:338 and 1:334 n. 13.

26 P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, and N. Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra* (Paris, 1970–82), 1: no. 68, line 4 and p. 348.

possible to find the seal in question and so at present we cannot verify the reading or propose a date.

## 9. Aplazites (eleventh century, second half)

DO 58.106.3571.— D. 17 mm; field 12 mm.

Obv. Decorative Latin cross on two steps with tendrils sprouting from the base. Two small dots and one large pellet decorate each end of the cross-arms. There is some similarity between the design of the cross on the obverse of this seal and the cross on Grierson's Class I anonymous follis, dated ca. 1075–ca. 1080.<sup>27</sup>

Rev. Inscription of four lines.

ΚΕΡ,Θ,|ΤΩCΩΔ,|ΑΠΛΑΖ,|ΤΗ

Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) τῷ σῷ δ(ούλῳ) Ἀπλαζ(ι)τῇ.



FIG. 9: Seal of Aplazites (eleventh century, second half). DO 58.106.3571.

The name Aplazites may perhaps reproduce the Arabic Abū l-Yazīd. Abū means "father." Two other individuals called Abū Yazīd are known from the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>28</sup> The name Yazīd was even borne by three Umayyad caliphs,<sup>29</sup> as well as the Umayyad teacher and man of letters al-Yazīdī.<sup>30</sup> There are also the Yazīdī, members of a Kurdish religious sect that already existed before the reforms of Shaykh 'Adī b. Musāfir in the early twelfth century.<sup>31</sup> This is the best suggestion that we can offer.

27 *DOC* 3.2:696–99 and pl. 68.

28 *El*<sup>3</sup>, s.vv. "Abū Yazīd al-Nukkārī" and "al-Bisṭāmī, Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd)."

29 *El*<sup>2</sup>, s.vv. "Yazīd (I) b. Mu'āwīya," "Yazīd (II) b. 'Abd al-Malik," and "Yazīd (III) b. al-Walid (I)."

30 *El*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "al-Yazīdī."

31 *El*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Yazīdī."

10. Aplesirtes protospatharios  
*epi tou Chrysotriklinou* and strategos  
(eleventh century, second third)

DO 55.1.2622.— D. 27 mm.

*Obv.* Bust of St. George holding a spear in his right hand and a small, round shield in his left hand. Inscription in two columns, but only the letters in the left column are visible: Α|ΓΕ|Ω — Ο ἄ(γιος) Γεώ[ργιος].

*Rev.* Inscription of six lines, preceded by decoration.

·:|+ΑΠΛΗ|.ΙΡΤ,ΑCΠΑ|.  
ΑΡ,ΕΠΗΤ,|✠ΓΚΛΗΝ,S|CΤΡΑΤΗ|Γ,

Ἀπλη[σ]ίρτ(ης) (πρωτο)σπα[θ]άρ(ιος) ἐπὶ τ(οῦ)  
Χρ(υσο)(τρι)κλήν(ου) (καὶ) στρατηγ(ός).



FIG. 10: Seal of Aplesirtes protospatharios *epi tou Chrysotriklinou* and strategos (eleventh century, second third). DO 55.1.2622.

On a parallel specimen in the Zacos collection (now BnF 3469), the sigma after ΑΠΛΗ is clear, but the next letter is lost. The same name may be attested on an eleventh-century seal published by M. Braunlin and J. Nesbitt.<sup>32</sup> Could Aplesirtes derive from Abū al-Širāt,<sup>33</sup> or have some connection with Si'ird, a town on the river Bohtan, southwest of Lake Van?

11. Leo Apochthmitis, protospatharios  
and taxiarches (eleventh century,  
second half, perhaps the 1070s–80s)

DO 58.106.2458.— D. 29 mm; field 25 mm.

*Obv.* St. Michael holding a labarum in his right hand and a globus in his left. There is some similarity

32 M. Braunlin and J. Nesbitt, "Selections from a Private Collection of Byzantine Bullae," *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 165–66, no. 8; see Lanz Auction 64, June 7, 1993, no. 1017 and *SBS* 8 (2003): 159, no. 8.

33 *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Širāt."

with imperial seals beginning with Michael VII, though the globus on this seal does not seem to have a cross.

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines, preceded by decoration.

–✠–|+ΛΕΟΝ|Α,CΠΑΘ,S|ΤΑΞΙΑΡΧ|ΟΑΠΟΧΘ|ΜΙΤΙ/

Λέον (πρωτο)σπαθ(άριος) (καὶ) ταξιάρχ(ης) ὁ  
Ἀποχθμίτις(ς).

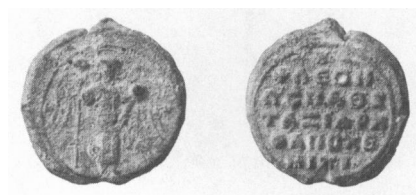


FIG. 11: Seal of Leo Apochthmitis, protospatharios and taxiarches (eleventh century, second half, perhaps 1070s–80s). DO 58.106.2458.

The word ἡ χθών ("earth, land, country") may lie behind χθ, or perhaps some connection with the Khath'am, an Arab tribe.<sup>34</sup>

12. Aposaites vestes  
(eleventh century, third quarter)

(a) DO 55.1.3717.— D. 21 mm; field 16 mm. (b) DO 47.2.1911.— D. 12 mm.

*Obv.* The Virgin Blachernitissa standing on a dais. Sigla at left and right: ΜΡ–ΘΥ — Μ(ήτη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ.

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines, preceded by decoration. The last two letters are between horizontal bars.

·|+CΚΕ|ΠΙCΜΒΑ|ΓΝΗΑΠ,CA|ΙΤΗREC|–ΤΗ–

Σκέπ(οι)ς μ(οι), ἀγνή, Ἀπ(ο)σαίτη βέστη.



FIG. 12A: Seal of Aposaites vestes (eleventh century, third quarter). DO 55.1.3717.

34 *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Khath'am."



FIG. 12B: Seal of Aposaites vestes (eleventh century, third quarter). DO 47.2.1911.

A twelve-syllable verse (B<sub>5</sub>). The name Aposaites is the Greek form of the Arabic Abū Saʿīd; “Abū” means “father” and “Saʿīd” means “happy, lucky, blissful, fortunate.”<sup>35</sup> The late tenth-century Greek translation of a dialogue between the ninth-century Arab astrologer Abū Maʿshar Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad (Ἀπομάσαρ or Albumasar) and his student Abū Saʿīd Shādhān b. Baḥr transcribes the latter’s name as “Ἀποσαίτ.”<sup>36</sup>

The name may be attested on a seal as early as ca. 900.<sup>37</sup> The specimen is decorated on the obverse with a patriarchal cross surrounded by an invocative inscription, and includes a four-line legend on the reverse. Jean-Claude Cheynet has identified the seal owner as Theophilos Aposaites, xenodochos, and he alludes to a vestes named Aposaites; he may have had in mind either of the present specimens. Cheynet believed that he could read ΑΠΟC.T, on the Thierry seal. Perhaps, though, we should read here ANACT, for Ἀναστ(ασίω), as it would be unusual (though not impossible) for a surname to appear on a seal of such early date.

A John Aposaites is attested on a seal published by V. Laurent.<sup>38</sup> The specimen has on the obverse a

35 A. Salahuddin, *A Dictionary of Muslim Names* (London, 1999), 182.

36 *CCAG* 5.1:146.35 (cod. Angelicus 29, fol. 43v) and 148.20 (fol. 47). On Abū Saʿīd Shādhān b. Baḥr and his conversations with Abū Maʿshar, published as *al-Mudhākarāt fī asrār al-nujūm* [“Dialogues on the secrets of the stars”], see *ET* 3, s.v. “Abū Maʿshar.” The *Mudhākarāt* was translated into Greek simultaneously with the *De revolutionibus nativitatū*: D. Pingree, “Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia,” *DOP* 43 (1989): 227 n. 2; *Albumasaris De revolutionibus nativitatū*, ed. D. Pingree (Leipzig, 1968), v–viii; and H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 2, *Philologie, Profandichtung, Musik, Mathematik und Astronomie, Naturwissenschaften, Medizin, Kriegswissenschaft, Rechtsliteratur* (Munich, 1978), 234–35.

37 Thierry Collection, no. 230; J.-C. Cheynet, *La société byzantine: L’apport des sceaux* (Paris, 2008), 644.

38 V. Laurent, *Documents de sigillographie byzantine: La collection C. Orghidan* (Paris, 1952), no. 413.

bust of the Virgin with a medallion before her and on the reverse an inscription of five lines. Laurent dates the seal to the late eleventh/early twelfth century. There is, however, no photo allowing one to control the reading.

### 13. Basil Aretzes (eleventh century, second half)

DO 58.106.869.— D. 17 mm.

*Obv.* Bust of the Virgin orans with a medallion of Christ before her. Sigla at left and right:  $\bar{M}-\bar{\Theta}$  —  $M(\eta\tau\eta\rho)\Theta(\epsilon\omicron\upsilon)$ .

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines. There may have been a small cross at the beginning.

$\bar{K}\bar{E}\bar{R}\bar{\Theta}$ ,| $RACI\Lambda I$ | $TOAPE|T\bar{Z}I$

$K(\acute{\upsilon}p\iota)\epsilon\beta(o\eta)\theta(ei)\ B\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\acute{i}(\omega)\ \tau o\ \acute{A}\rho\acute{\epsilon}\tau\zeta\iota.$



FIG. 13: Seal of Basil Aretzes (eleventh century, second half). DO 58.106.869.

The zeta in the final line of the reverse inscription is malformed and as a result the transcription is uncertain. The letter appears to be similar in shape to an elongated Latin capital S. If the reading is correct, the name may be linked to Aretsou in Bithynia (modern Darica).<sup>39</sup> During the Byzantine period, the names  $\bar{\rho}\acute{\iota}\tau\zeta\iota\omicron\nu$  or  $\bar{\rho}\acute{\iota}\tau\zeta\iota\omicron\nu$  prevailed. The village and fortress were situated at the entrance to the Gulf of Nikomedeia, 45 km west of Nikomedeia.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the surname Aretzianos is attested in the fourteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

39 Today’s Αρετσού in the Demos of Kalamaria (south of Thessalonike) was populated in 1922 by Greek refugees from Aretsou in Bithynia.

40 K. Belke, *Bithynien und Hellespontos*, *TIB* 13 (Vienna, forthcoming).

41 *PLP* 93118: John Aretzianos, a merchant active in 1363, possibly in Herakleia of Pontos.

#### 14. Theodore Aroudes (eleventh century, second half)

DO 58.106.1530.— D. 16 mm; field 11 mm.

*Obv.* Bust of the Virgin Blachernitissa. Sigla at left and right:  $\bar{M}-\bar{\Theta}$  —  $M(\eta\tau\eta\rho)\Theta(\epsilon\omicron\upsilon)$ .

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines, preceded by a dot between two horizontal bars; the letters of the last line are between pellets.

$\bar{\Theta}\bar{K}E\bar{R},\bar{\Theta},|\bar{\Theta}E\bar{\omicron}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\omega}|\bar{P}\bar{O}N\bar{A}\bar{P}\bar{\Upsilon}|\cdot\bar{\Delta}H\bar{N}\cdot$

$\Theta(\epsilon\omicron\tau\acute{o})\kappa\epsilon\beta(\omicron\eta)\theta(\epsilon\iota)\Theta\epsilon\acute{o}\delta\omega\rho\omicron\nu\bar{\Lambda}\rho\acute{o}\upsilon\delta\eta\nu.$



FIG. 14: Seal of Theodore Aroudes (eleventh century, second half). DO 58.106.1530.

Ptolemy mentions  $\bar{\Lambda}\rho\omicron\upsilon\delta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , a town on the Euphrates, in his *Geography* (5.15.14.3).<sup>42</sup> It is called Arulis in the Tabula Peutingeriana and was 24 Roman miles from Zeugma on the route to Samosata.<sup>43</sup> The Septuagint, 2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel) 23:25, lists “ $\Sigma\alpha\mu\alpha\iota\acute{o}\bar{\Lambda}\rho\omicron\upsilon\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $E\lambda\iota\kappa\alpha\acute{o}\bar{\Lambda}\rho\omega\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ .” The surname may also be related to “*arūd*,” the term for ancient Arabic metrics, which originally meant “the transverse pole or piece of wood which is in the middle of a tent, and which is its main support and hence the middle portion (or foot) of a verse.”<sup>44</sup>

#### 15. Paul Artenos, proedros (eleventh/twelfth century)

DO 58.106.1311.— D. 22 mm.

*Obv.* St. Paul holding a rotulus in his right hand (the hand is not visible). Inscription in two columns:  $\bar{O}|\bar{A}|\bar{\Gamma}|\bar{\Upsilon},-\bar{P}|\bar{A}|\bar{V}|\bar{\Lambda}$ , —  $\bar{O}\bar{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron(\varsigma)\bar{P}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\upsilon}\bar{\lambda}(\omicron\varsigma)$ .

<sup>42</sup> A. Stückelberger and G. Graßhoff, eds., *Klaudios Ptolemaios Handbuch der Geographie* (Basel, 2006–09), 2:564–65.

<sup>43</sup> *RE* 2:1487.

<sup>44</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “*Arūd*.” See also *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “*Nizāmī ‘Arūdī Samarqandī*” for the twelfth-century Persian poet of the Ghūrid court.

*Rev.* Inscription of four lines, followed by decoration.

$\cdot\bar{\Phi}\bar{R}\bar{A}\bar{\Gamma}|\bar{I}|\bar{P}\bar{A}\bar{V}\bar{\Lambda}\bar{O}\bar{N}|\bar{A}\bar{E}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{O}\bar{N}\bar{T}\bar{\Upsilon}|\bar{A}\bar{P}\bar{T}\bar{H}\bar{N}|\cdot$

$[\Sigma]\bar{\phi}\bar{r}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\gamma}|\bar{\iota}[\varsigma]\bar{P}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\upsilon}\bar{\lambda}\omicron\nu(\bar{\pi}\bar{r}\bar{o})\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\delta}\bar{r}\bar{o}\nu\tau\bar{o}\bar{\Upsilon}\bar{A}\bar{p}\bar{\tau}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}[\omicron\bar{\Upsilon}].$



FIG. 15: Seal of Paul Artenos, proedros (eleventh/twelfth century). DO 58.106.1311.

The *PLP* lists two Artenoi, and although it is quite probable that these people come from Arta, we do not insist on it.<sup>45</sup> Two similar names are not related to Arta. Artēna is another name of sultan Eretna in eastern Anatolia (d. 1352), and is etymologically related to the Sanskrit “*ratna*,” meaning “gemstone.”<sup>46</sup> In addition, Artēn was an Armenian *išchan* of Gabelean (451).<sup>47</sup>

#### 16. Niketas Atzikoumites, proedros (eleventh century, last third)

Fogg 1584.— D. 27 mm.

*Obv.* Bust of the Virgin Nikopoios holding a medallion of Christ before her. Sigla at left and right (not visible):  $\bar{M}\bar{P}-\bar{\cdot}$  —  $M\eta(\tau\eta)\rho[\Theta(\epsilon\omicron\upsilon)]$ .

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines, the last two letters between horizontal bars.

$\bar{\cdot}\bar{K}\bar{E}\bar{R},\bar{\Theta},|\bar{\cdot}|\bar{I}\bar{K}\bar{H}\bar{T}\bar{A}\bar{\cdot}\bar{\cdot}|\bar{\cdot}\bar{\Delta}\bar{P}\bar{O}\bar{T}\bar{\omega}\bar{A}|\bar{\cdot}|\bar{I}\bar{K}\bar{\Upsilon}\bar{M}|\bar{\cdot}-\bar{T}|\bar{\cdot}$

$[+\bar{\Theta}(\epsilon\omicron\tau\acute{o})]\kappa\epsilon\beta(\omicron\eta)\theta(\epsilon\iota)[N]\bar{\iota}\bar{\kappa}\eta\bar{\tau}\bar{\alpha}[\bar{\pi}\bar{r}\bar{o}\bar{\epsilon}]\bar{\delta}\bar{r}(\bar{\omega})\bar{\tau}\bar{\omega}\bar{\Lambda}[\bar{\tau}\bar{\zeta}]\bar{\iota}\bar{\kappa}\bar{o}\bar{\nu}\bar{\mu}\bar{\iota}\bar{\tau}\bar{\iota}.$

<sup>45</sup> *PLP* 1445, a landowner on the island of Lemnos (ca. 1355 or earlier), and 91358, Michael Artenos, a *paroikos*, possibly in Gomatu at Hierissos (ca. 1300). Concerning Arta, see P. Soustal and J. Koder, *Nikopolis und Kephallēnia*, *TIB* 3 (Vienna, 1981), 113–15.

<sup>46</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “Eretna.”

<sup>47</sup> F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg, 1895; Hildesheim, 1963), s.v. “*Arτάνης*.”





the name: the military commanders Theodore and George, both active in 1223 at Trebizond. The surname Amageireutos (no. 5), meaning “uncooked,” also surfaces in a Patmos document of 1271. The fact that it occurs on a Dumbarton Oaks seal of the twelfth century would indicate that the family name had a relatively long life. In addition, we have postulated that toponyms may lie behind certain surnames. We suggest, for example, that Paul Artenos, proedros (no. 15), as well as two other Artenoi, was from the city of Arta, and that Theodore Aphraziates’s surname (no. 7) may be linked to the bandon or topoteresia Aphrazeia.

In some cases, it is clear that the owner of a seal was not Greek. The monk Nikephoros Abasios’s surname (no. 1) may reflect a common Armenian name or may signify that the person was an Abchazian, and the name Aposaites (no. 12) is of Arab origin. Sometimes the etymology of a surname is in doubt because we cannot be certain what language is involved. For example, the surname Apochthmitis (no. 11) may involve an etymology derived either from Greek or Arabic. If a “normal” Christian name is combined with an exotic one, the latter can be his former name (before he was baptized), or his father’s or an ancestor’s. We chose the names that appear in this study on the basis that they

are unusual and are difficult to read. How many names are Greek or non-Greek is purely accidental, as is the number of names involving toponyms or personal characteristics. Other lists by other scholars would yield different statistics.

There is a great deal to be learned from seals about the formation of family names. Sometimes it is a matter of personal characteristics, sometimes of geographical origins. In any event, we can see that prosopographical studies involve a wide range of languages: not just Greek, but also Arabic, Persian, Slavic, Armenian, and Georgian. Further progress with the publication of names will happen only if scholars with different linguistic skills establish and maintain lines of communication.

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